

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 4

NEW YORK POST
11 March 1986

Contras' struggle will die without U.S. aid: Pentagon

By NILES LATHEM
Bureau Chief

WASHINGTON — Many Nicaraguan rebels have abandoned the battlefield and won't be able to resume their struggle for democracy if Congress refuses to approve new military aid.

That was a conclusion of an analysis prepared for President Reagan by senior Pentagon and CIA officials.

The U.S.-backed guerrillas, known as contras, are faced with a lack of food, guns and medical supplies, and are battling an increasingly sophisticated Nicaraguan army.

In the last few months, more than 10,000 contras have fled their secret posts in Nicaragua and crossed



PRESIDENT REAGAN

the border into Honduras, experts say.

It is estimated that 3000 to 5000 contras are continuing their struggle against the estimated 110,000 troops of the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua, administration officials said yesterday.

White House officials now believe that with-

out a massive influx of military aid to the rebels, democratic resistance to the Soviet- and Cuban-backed regime will come to an end.

Without any organized opposition, the Sandinistas will continue to consolidate a Marxist government in America's backyard, officials said.

The military analysis was revealed as Reagan stepped up his campaign to win congressional approval of his proposal to send \$100 million in military and humanitarian aid to the rebels.

"Think of what a signal we'll be sending to the rest of the world if this aid to the freedom fighters is passed," Reagan said in a speech at

the White House yesterday.

"And wouldn't it be wonderful to someday see in downtown Managua celebrations similar to those we have seen recently in Queens Park, Manila and Port-au-Prince, Haiti?"

Reagan said he believed he still could win next week's showdown vote on the contra aid package in the House — even though head counts show Reagan is behind.

The report tied the fading strength of the contras to the decision by Congress last year to cut off all U.S. military assistance.

Congress voted instead to send the rebels \$27 million in humanitarian aid.